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SRI K. P. GOPALAN :—" Will the Hon. Minister be pleased to see that boiled rice is sent to Malabar instead of raw rice? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I have already answered that we are making every attempt to get the maximum quantity of par-boiled rice possible. But the difficulty is that it is not possible to get par-boiled rice sufficient enough for supply to the entire Malabar district."

SRI S. RAMALINGAM :—" போக்குவரத்துச் செலவையும் நிர்வாகச் செலவையும் கழித்துத்தான் மலையாளத்தில் அரிசியின் விலை நிர்ணயிக்கப்பட்டிருக்கிறது என்று கனம் மந்திரி அவர்கள் சொன்னார். இந்தச் சலுகை மற்ற ஜில்லாக்களுக்கும் கொடுக்கப்பட்டிருக்கிறதா ? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" We have fixed a uniform price for all the districts—Re. 0–11–6 for second sort and Re. 0–14–6 for first sort."

SRI C. H. KANARAN :—" In view of the fact that a bag of rice is sold for Rs. 30 in Pollachi and for Rs. 48 in Palghat, will the Government take steps to reduce the price of rice in Malabar? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I think the hon. Member is referring to the open market price. The controlled price is much more than the open market price, if the figures given by the hon. Member are correct."

SRI T. C. NARAYANAN NAMBIAR :—" In view of the orders passed by the Government, will the Hon. Minister be pleased to issue a circular to the ration shops to refund to the purchasers the excess collections if such collections had been made? "

THE HON. SRI C. SUBRAMANIAM :—" I do not think it will be possible to refund the excess collections as such. If there is any unjustified increase, certainly I shall go into the matter and see how it has occurred."

Furnishing of information by Heads of Departments to M.L.As.

* 89 *Q.*—SRI K. ARANGANATHAN : Will the Hon. the Chief Minister be pleased to state whether any circular was issued to heads of departments, not to give any information to the Members of the Madras Legislature on any matter?

THE HON. SRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :—" It is hardly necessary for me to say that no such circular was issued, Sir. But as a question is asked, I say it."

SRI K. ARANGANATHAN :—" Sir, at the time when the Madras Indebted Agriculturists (Temporary Relief) Bill was before this House, I went to the Secretariat to get figures about debtors. The Secretary told me that he could not give me any information about this as he had received instructions from the Government that he should not give any information."

THE HON. SRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :—" I am not sure of the facts. But the hon. Member says that the Secretary said that he could not give. I believe he said he could not give because he did not have the figures."

SRI V. R. NAGARAJAN :—" Even if the question put by the hon. Member may not be wholly correct, can the Hon. the Chief Minister explain it away? "

THE HON. SRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :—" I will explain. The question was whether a circular was issued to the heads of departments not to give any information to the Members of the Legislature on any matter. I replied that it was hardly necessary for me to say that no such circular was issued. But what the hon. Member referred to was the difficulty of getting information on a particular matter in a particular case. About this, I have explained the position more than once before, and with your permission I shall again explain the position. The Government Order that is in force is an Order issued in 1947. The instructions contained in it are as follows :—

1. That a Collector may ordinarily furnish members of the Legislature at their request with information within his cognizance as to statistics or facts relating to local matters of public concern,

2. That contents of correspondence or communications containing confidential information are not to be divulged,

3. That information on questions involving a statement of general policy for which a higher authority is responsible should be refused,

4. That if, at any time, the Collector considers that compliance with a request for information is not expedient, he may send a courteous reply to the Member that he is unable to furnish the information, and

5. That should any such demand for information be addressed to an authority subordinate to the Collector, it should be submitted to the Collector for orders.

The instructions in item 5 above were modified in the same year to the effect that factual information may be furnished by the district officers of the Public Works Department and other departments to Members of the Legislature, on request, without a reference to the Collector of the district concerned. They should, however, obtain the prior approval of the head of the department concerned. In order to avoid the considerable delay that may result from this procedure, District Officers are permitted to give replies direct to obvious factual enquiries, for example, as to whether a scheme has been sanctioned, when work was started, when the work is likely to be finished, etc., if the answer is clear and there is no obvious objection.

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"There is no need for any misapprehension that undue secrecy will be maintained with regard to matters on which the Legislature Members are entitled to get information."

SRI S. SWAYAMPRAKASAM :—" Mr. Aranganathan said that some Secretary told him that he could not give him the information because of instructions from the Government. But the Chief Minister says that he could not give because he was not in a position to give and not because he was instructed by the Government not to give. Is it the policy of the Government that the heads of departments should, when they are unable to give information, refuse on the pretext that they have been instructed by the Government not to give the information?"

THE HON. SRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :—" This assumes that the conversation that took place has been reproduced here correctly. I know the difficulty of reproducing conversations and the hon. Member who put the last supplementary question also knows it in the course of his practice as a lawyer. It is difficult to report a conversation correctly. Especially when one has a bias in regard to the matter, he understands the conversation in one way. On the spur of the moment, a statement is made by the hon. Member: 'I can reproduce the conversation from my own imagination. The Secretary said that he could not give the information and added further that it was not possible for him to give because he had instructions from the Government not to give.' But we are not sitting in judgment over the conversation. The answer was given to the hon. Member's question that no circular containing such instructions was issued, and I have explained the position. Further, I may tell hon. Members that in an office, the Secretary, Deputy Secretary or Assistant Secretary is not in the same position as an executive officer."

SRI A. RAMASAMY TEVAR :—" May I know from the Hon. the Chief Minister whether this Government Order will equally apply to all Ministers on administrative grounds?" 10-20 a.m.

THE HON. SRI C. RAJAGOPALACHARI :—" I think I understand the hon. Member. Nobody else does. (Laughter.) His question is: 'whether the restrictions placed on Collectors and other officers should also be observed by the Ministers, when persons go to them?' The answer is 'Yes, Sir'."

MR. SPEAKER :—" I have placed 28 questions before the House. It is already 10-25 a.m. now. We have so far covered only four questions. I want to finish all the questions within the question hour. Therefore, I pass on to the next question now."